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Chairman: Mr. Franz MATSCH (Austria).

AGENDA ITEM 59

Question of Algeria (A/4140, A/C.1/L.246 and Add.1)
(continued)

**GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF THE
DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/C.1/L.246 AND ADD.1)
(continued)**

1. Mr. QUAISON-SACKEY (Ghana) observed that at the present session the First Committee was discussing the Algerian question in circumstances which, while more hopeful than in past years—because of the courageous statements made by the President of the French Republic and by the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic—were still tragic inasmuch as the war was continuing in Algeria. Since 1955, many countries had declared that the people of Algeria were entitled to exercise their right to self-determination, but until 16 September 1959 France had refused to recognize that right. Fortunately, that principle had now been accepted by the French Government, and both parties recognized that the problem could be solved only through negotiations undertaken in a sincere desire to arrive at a mutually acceptable agreement. Certain details concerning the nature of the negotiations and the persons who were to take part in them were still creating difficulties, and it was unfortunate that, by its absence, the French delegation had refused to contribute to the discussion of the question. He hoped that the high level on which the debate had been conducted would convince France of the Committee's good intentions; the Committee's sole concern was to ensure that a just solution of the tragic problem of Algeria was achieved without delay. His delegation, too, would respond to the appeal for restraint which had been voiced during the debate.

2. The Conference of Independent African States, held at Accra in 1958 and at Monrovia in 1959, had stressed the gravity of the Algerian problem, urged France to recognize the Algerian people's right to self-determination, appealed for the cessation of hostilities, and requested France to enter into negotiations with the Algerian nationalists with a view to reaching a final and just settlement. It had therefore been gratifying to his Government that the President of the French Republic had recognized the necessity of taking those steps. The French President's offer had been accepted by the Algerian leaders, who were anxious that any preliminary negotiations should deal with the necessary guarantees for the projected cease-fire and referendum. At the present stage, in order not

to complicate the delicate negotiations which they were to undertake, it was best to leave to the representatives of the Algerian Provisional Government the task of examining the three alternatives proposed by France. His delegation wished to emphasize, however, that the negotiations should take place as early as possible in order to put an end to the Algerian conflict, which was a constant threat to international peace and to the maintenance of harmonious relations in a vital area of Africa.

3. There could be no doubt as to the parties concerned: they were, on the one hand, the Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic and, on the other, the French Government. With regard to the Algerian spokesman, his delegation was convinced that the Algerian Provisional Government had chosen them in all good faith. The fact that they were at present held in detention by France was beside the point. There were many similar cases in the history of colonialism, among which those of Gandhi, Nehru, Bourguiba and Nkrumah were well known. The present Tunisian representative at the United Nations had himself been released from prison in order to negotiate the arrangements for his country's independence. Moreover, the Algerian leaders in question had been the victims of an outright kidnapping, and, by accepting them as representatives of the Algerian Provisional Government, France would be correcting a deplorable situation. Since it was the responsibility of the United Nations to ensure that everything possible was done to enable the two parties to come together, his delegation appealed to the friends of France to use their influence to induce the French leaders to meet as soon as possible with the Algerian representatives, whose most earnest desire was to initiate negotiations aimed at a peaceful settlement. His Government was prepared to render any assistance that might be requested of it. Whatever solution was chosen by the Algerian people, the French people would not suffer as a result, for the cultural, economic and other ties existing between the two countries would cause Algeria to remain on friendly terms with France. If the present conflict continued, however, those ties might well be broken.

4. Contrary to the views expressed by some delegations, he felt that it was necessary for the Committee to adopt a resolution in order to encourage the parties concerned to enter into "pourparlers". His delegation had for that reason joined in sponsoring the twenty-one-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.246), which was designed to accomplish precisely that purpose. His delegation hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by a large majority and that the French and the Algerians would show the necessary good will and perseverance.

5. The CHAIRMAN informed the Committee that the Federation of Malaya had been added (A/C.1/L.246/Add.1) to the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/C.1/L.246.

6. Mr. SULAIMAN (Iraq) reminded the Committee of the draft resolution (A/C.1/L.232) adopted at the previous session by the First Committee, although not by the General Assembly, of the letter and memorandum^{1/} which twenty-one countries, including Iraq, had addressed to the President of the Security Council on 10 July 1959, drawing attention to the plight of the Algerian refugees and to the dangers inherent in the Algerian situation, and of the explanatory memorandum (A/4140) which twenty-one African and Asian States had submitted on 14 July, requesting the inclusion of the Algerian question in the agenda of the fourteenth session and calling attention to continued violations of human rights.

7. He had been happy to learn that France had finally recognized the Algerian people's right to self-determination. However, that was not a right that could be granted by a foreign Power; it was a basic right, and, if it had been disregarded in the past, that situation should be corrected in keeping with the present trend of history. The Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic had taken note of General de Gaulle's declaration, had expressed justifiable pride at what had been achieved, thanks to the determination with which the Algerian people had gone on fighting for five years, and had recalled that one of the objectives of the revolution had been precisely to obtain recognition of the Algerians' right to self-determination. Yet, the war was continuing, and there were some who still spoke of "pacification" and of "French Algeria".

8. The statements of General de Gaulle and the Algerian Provisional Government had many points in common: they recognized that the problem must be solved on the basis of self-determination, that the right to self-determination must be exercised freely, and that the referendum must be conducted in conditions of peace and tranquillity. In addition, the two parties agreed on the necessity of entering into "pourparlers" before a referendum was held. The Provisional Government insisted that the "pourparlers" must also deal with the conditions for implementing the right of self-determination. On the other hand, the President of the French Republic had stated that the procedures for the projected referendum would be worked out at the proper time, in other words, probably four years after peace had been fully restored. That meant that the only discussions which he envisaged for the near future were those relating to a cease-fire.

9. The cease-fire, however, was not an end in itself. How could the Algerian Army be expected to lay down its arms without first making certain that the people would have ample guarantees to exercise, in full freedom, the right of self-determination? If they did so, they would be betraying the trust the Algerian people had placed in them. Many questions of detail would have to be worked out in advance in order to ensure the honesty, impartiality and freedom of the vote.

10. There was some justification for the misgivings of the Algerians. In the first place, General de Gaulle had denied Algeria's national unity and had indicated that if necessary France would arrange for the regrouping and settlement of Algerians who wished to remain French. In other words, he was contemplating

partition of the country. That was a matter of supreme importance for the Algerians, who could not accept a solution of the problem which did not recognize Algeria's unity and guarantee its territorial integrity. Secondly, the General was intending to make arrangements for the exploitation and transport of Sahara oil to be ensured whatever happened. But the Algerian Government was not surrendering Algeria's sovereign right to the ownership of its own natural resources.

11. There was another passage of the French statement which raised a very serious problem: the declaration that the referendum would have to be endorsed by the French electorate. That condition reduced almost to vanishing point the freedom of choice promised to the Algerians. Finally, there was the question of who was to arrange and supervise the referendum. It was quite clear that the French Government was vehemently against independence, which General de Gaulle had described as an incredible and disastrous result. In view of that, was it unreasonable to feel misgivings about the possibility of France organizing and supervising the consultation? Had the 1958 referendum and the various elections following it been anything but a mockery? Several leading French military and political personalities had made extremely alarming statements, indicating that nothing had changed; in that connexion he quoted the statements made by General Challe, General Massu and Mr. Debré, who had insisted that the army must be present during the referendum.

12. Thus, the statements of General de Gaulle concerning the endorsement of the Algerian vote by the French people, the possible partition of the country, the maintenance of French territorial claims in the Sahara, the date and the scope of the "pourparlers" concerning the vote, and the organization and supervision of the referendum, all raised certain problems which must be settled in advance if the cease-fire was to last. Furthermore, between whom should the "pourparlers" be held? General de Gaulle had said that they would be held with what he called the leaders of the insurrection and the representatives of the external organization of the rebellion. That in fact meant the Algerian Provisional Government. That Government did not expect or solicit recognition from France, but it did ask to have an opportunity to discuss conditions for a cease-fire and for the application of the right of self-determination. For that purpose it had designated five leaders who were at present in France against their will, including Mr. Ahmed Ben Bella, First Deputy Prime Minister in the Provisional Government. It would not be the first time that imprisoned leaders had been released to negotiate on behalf of their people: the cases of Nehru, Nkrumah, Mohammed V and Bourguiba had already been mentioned in that connexion. If France was sincere, it should welcome the offer made by the Algerian Provisional Government.

13. It was in that spirit that his delegation, together with many others, had submitted the draft resolution before the Committee. That draft stated facts and approached the question in a moderate and constructive manner. The adoption of the draft resolution would give the efforts of the two parties the moral support and backing of the world Organization just at a time when there were real chances of agreement. Far from hampering their efforts, the resolution would encourage them. The United Nations was entitled,

^{1/} Official Records of the Security Council, Fourteenth Year, Supplement for July, August and September 1959, document S/4195.

indeed was in duty bound, to urge the two sides to settle their differences in a spirit of understanding, in order not only to put an end to a tragic war but to settle the Algerian question in conformity with the principles of the Charter.

14. To exclude the United Nations from the question would be an unwarranted slight on the prestige of the Organization and a denial of its beneficial influence in world affairs. How could the United Nations remain silent on a question which had already cost so many lives? Iraq, for one, would continue to give all possible assistance to the Algerian people in their heroic struggle for national liberation, first, because the Algerian people were an integral part of the Arab nation, and secondly, because their fight for liberty had symbolized for the whole world the determination of the Asian and African peoples to live in dignity and freedom.

15. The time had come for the colonialists to realize that colonialism did not pay. It might be wondered whether France was profiting by the enormous sums of money it was investing in the Algerian war. It would be interesting to compare the economic strength of France with those of the non-colonial European States. France was constantly reminding the world of its great material contribution to Algeria's development. Would it not be more in the interest of the Algerian people for France to stop both the war and the help she claimed to be rendering them? The Algerians would then be able to undertake their own development, like the peoples of many other newly independent countries. There was no justification for General de Gaulle's statement that independence for Algeria would bring in its wake abysmal political chaos. By any criterion of national maturity, the Algerian people were the equals of their brethren in Tunisia, Morocco, Ghana, Guinea and other States. None of the disasters anticipated by the President of the French Republic had happened in those countries. Moreover, the Algerians had proved their ability to manage their own affairs: in the liberated areas of their country they had established schools and health and social centres, which had never been provided under the French administration. On the battlefield, they had demonstrated their ability to conduct the affairs of a sovereign State. Their struggle would go down in history as one of the most remarkable episodes of the last days of imperialism. As for any absence of unity and sovereignty, it was generally agreed that the national State was a relatively recent development. Many of the countries of Europe had attained sovereignty and independence only in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Would it be fair to deny them to a people because it had been brought under the yoke of colonial domination less than 130 years ago? The trend of history was well defined, and could not be reversed.

16. Mr. NONG KIMNY (Cambodia) said that the question of Algeria was one which every year confronted the Cambodian delegation with an extremely delicate problem of conscience, for Cambodia was a sincere friend both of France and of the Arab world. Because it was firmly attached to the principle of self-determination, Cambodia considered that the Algerian people had the right to choose their own future; and because it was sincerely attached to its friendship with France, it would like to see that great friendly State freed from the burden of a long and, as it were,

fratricidal war. Viewing the Algerian problem dispassionately, the Cambodian delegation had no intention of condemning either of the parties out of hand, and it welcomed any developments which might contribute to an easing of tensions.

17. Since the thirteenth session, certain events had occurred which offered hope of a peaceful solution in accordance with the principles and spirit of the Charter. There had been the statement of 16 September 1959 in which General de Gaulle had proclaimed the principle of self-determination for the Algerians and offered a cease-fire. That marked a fundamental change in French policy towards Algeria, and there now existed prospects of peace and reconciliation between France and Algeria.

18. As Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's Prime Minister, had remarked, General de Gaulle's proposals displayed great nobility, considering the extent of French interests in Algeria and the numerous moral problems which confronted France by reason of the presence in Algeria of a million Frenchmen who had been born there and no longer had any roots in France, the large number of Algerian loyalists, the state of opinion in the French Army, the Sahara oil and similar factors. Prince Norodom Sihanouk had proposed a three-stage solution, namely, armistice, consultation of the Algerians, and general elections.

19. On the other hand, the Provisional Government of Algeria had announced on 28 September 1959 that it would accept the application of the principle of self-determination in respect of the Algerian people and that it would be willing to enter into talks with the French Government to discuss conditions and guarantees for the application of self-determination.

20. On 10 November 1959, at a press conference, General de Gaulle had further stated that the Algerians would have to decide their future for themselves and that their choice would be entirely free, because France wished the question to be settled once and for all. All Algerians would be able to participate in the consultation without coercion of any kind, and whoever they were, wherever they came from and whatever their platform, would participate, not only in the voting, but also in the preliminary discussions held at the appropriate time to settle the organization of the ballot.

21. However, in spite of the basic agreement on the principle of self-determination which seemed to have been achieved, talks had not yet begun. The parties concerned were faced with a new obstacle, namely, the difficulty of agreeing on the conditions and guarantees for the application of the principle of self-determination. The Provisional Government of Algeria felt that the conditions for the application of self-determination could not be discussed separately from the cease-fire.

22. If France had been present during the Committee's discussions, it might have been able to provide the Algerian leaders, whose fears the Cambodian delegation readily understood, with any necessary additional information. Accordingly, the Cambodian delegation regretted France's absence; but it could also understand the reasons for that absence. In view of the complexities of the problem and the encouraging prospects facing the parties concerned, further patience and prudence were called for. The time had perhaps come when public discussions might prove

less effective and should give way to traditional diplomacy. It was the duty of the United Nations to make every effort to ease tensions and encourage the parties to take steps leading towards a peaceful settlement; that is, to meet for discussions around the conference table instead of on the battlefield.

23. Mr. PAZHAWAK (Afghanistan) said that his country's position had been clearly stated at previous sessions. The cause at issue was that of a people and of a nation engaged in a war of independence which threatened not only friendly relations among nations, but also international peace and security. Moreover, it was a human cause based on one of the most fundamental rights, that of self-determination.

24. Like all other similar problems, the question under discussion should be solved on the basis of peaceful negotiations between the two parties concerned: France and the legitimate leaders of Algeria. The legitimate standing of the parties must be emphasized because history showed that it was a matter of paramount importance, and that recognition of that standing was the only hope of reaching a genuine understanding which could secure a lasting peace, the ultimate goal of the solution of any problem of concern to the United Nations. On the other hand, it must not be forgotten that no negotiation could be fair if it was restricted and subject to conditions which were not fully in harmony with the dignity and honour of the parties concerned.

25. With those considerations in mind, the Afghan delegation had joined the sponsors of the twenty-two-Power draft resolution (A/C.1/L.246 and Add.1). The draft resolution reflected the considered opinion of a large number of Member States. It was based on the declared acceptance of a right by both parties. It was an expression of the United Nations Charter, aimed at the termination of a war and the peaceful implementation of a fundamental right of peoples and

nations. It was a positive answer to the appeals for moderation which had so rightly been made during the present discussion. It was the outcome of a realistic way of thinking about the changed situation. It was an answer to the deep concern regarding the continuance of hostilities in Algeria.

26. The Afghan delegation was gratified that both parties were equally convinced of the need for a peaceful agreement. That was partly due to the fact that the parties realized the good intentions of the United Nations, which had expressed its views in considered terms. The part that the United Nations had played and must continue to play in promoting a solution of the Algerian question should not be forgotten. While not underestimating the efforts made by the French and by the Algerian leaders, it should nevertheless be emphasized that the efforts made by the United Nations had always proved effective and useful. Accordingly, the Afghan delegation could not share the view that it was now less necessary for the United Nations to take effective action by adopting a draft resolution on the question. It was convinced that the adoption of the twenty-two-Power draft resolution would serve the cause of peace between France and Algeria and the cause of Algerian independence.

27. If the French delegation had not deprived the Committee of its presence, the Afghan delegation would have listened with great interest and an open mind to its views, which would have been very useful in the present discussion.

28. It should be pointed out that one of the parties, which was not a Member of the Organization or a great Power, was placing its confidence and hope in the United Nations, and was convinced that the latter would honour its responsibilities.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.